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THE MAXX



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(COMICS PRESENTS

THE MAXXTM

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MAXX #4. August 1993. FIRST PRINTING. An Image Comics Group title published by Image Comics. Entire contents TM & © 1993 by Sam Kieth, all rights reserved. "You'll read anything, huh?" Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Sam Kieth. Send correspondence to: Sam Kieth, 4363 Hazel Avenue, Suite 1-285, Fair Oaks, California, 95628. Publishers and creator assume no responsibility for unsolicited materials.

Printed in Canada

I was sitting under the Jones Street underpass yesterday.

That's 'cause I want to be a writer...

...an' writers gotta have EXPERIENCE. Like underpasses.

"Hi," I said. "My name's Sarah."

At first, he didn't say anything.

There was an old BUM there, too.

Then he made a funny noise in his throat. He said his name was...

It turned out he was a superhero, fighting this villain called MR. GONE.

But he was also this jungle guy fighting SABER-TOOTHED TIGERS and stuff in AUSTRALIA.

I didn't have to make any of that stuff up (even though I AM gonna be a writer). He just came right out an' told me, all the fight scenes an' everything. I 'specially liked the little COW BATHROOM.

You say this guy was SERIOUSLY NUTS? Well, !*DUH!*

An' then, right out of the blue, he says he knew my father.

MAD

I can almost
see his barber-
shop-quartet
face in my
mind.

Dear ol'
Dad.

Lovable ol'
Dad.

Dead ol'
Dad.

I remember him
with this big, comy
weird mustache.
I don't know if
that part was real
or if I just made
it up to make him
SEEM more real.

He died when
I was young.
Too young to
remember.

Anyway, the
important part
was about three
years ago he got
real mad at his
boss, so he went
into his office
with a rifle and
shot everybody.

And then
himself.

I don't see
why he had to
do that. Erase
HIMSELF, I
mean.

God, did
it HURT.

I don't see
why he had
to LEAVE me...

...alone.

WOW

PEACE,
SUNSHINE.

I don't see why she
has to BE like this.
She wasn't like this
before Dad offed
himself.

DID YOU HAVE A
GROKKIN' KARMA
KIND OF DAY...?
DID YOU CATCH
ANY BAD VIBES
TODAY?

I mean, like wasn't
the SIXTIES a long
time ago?

SO,
HOW'S SCHOOL?
TRIPPY?

S'OKAY.

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU
WERE A DISAPPOINT-
MENT TO US OR ANYTHING.
IT'S JUST THAT YOU PULL
BACK. JUST LIKE HE USED
TO DO. I'LL NEVER FOR-
GIVE HIM FOR THAT.

GROOVY!
NOW WE CAN BE
LIKE SISTERS!
WHO'S GOING TO
TAKE YOU TO
THE PROM?

TELL ME I'M
NOT A BAD
MOTHER! TELL
ME I DIDN'T
RUIN YOUR
LIFE!

SUPPOSE
YOU DIDN'T
RUIN MY
LIFE, MOM.

OH,
GOD!

YOU BETTER
SHARE WITH ME,
SARAH. I WON'T
HAVE YOU ENDING
UP LIKE YOUR
FATHER!

I DIDN'T MEAN
THAT! WHY DID I
SAY THAT?

IF Dad had to
shoot somebody,
why couldn't it
have been HER?

Did my
saying
that
SHOCK
you?

HUGGED
TODAY

HENDRIX

GLOBAL
WARMING

Writers are
SUPPOSED to shock
people. We say witty
and uncontrolled
things that RIP the
shroud off a DECAY-
ING SOCIETY...

...and
EXPOSE
it for
what it is!

IT WAS, LIKE,
A HAPPENING
GROOVE TO
HAVE THIS CHAT
WITH YOU,
SWEETIE.

Good.

SAVE THE WHALE! DON'T EAT
TUNA!

PHIN

BAW
SPRY
CARDS.
SAVE
OUR
OZONE.

GLOBAL
COOLING

She's going on about
how she isn't really
angry at me.

NOT REALLY.

It's of DAD
who let her
down.

Not me.

Nope, not
Good of me.

Mom's screaming
fits and crying
jags last all night.

So I
SHARE...

...tell
Mom it's
O.K. ...

...mother
HER.

It's WEIRD. Dad
left HER...and in
a way, she left
ME.

About this time,
I started carrying
a GUN. (That's what
us writers call
FORESHADOWING.)

We'll chat
the IDEA,
any way...



But first I
have to tell
you about...

Jimmy is
cool.

He beats up littler kids and
takes their lunch money. I
think that's kind of cool. No
matter how low you are in
the FOOD CHAIN, there's
always somebody LOWER.

I think WE'RE
all either ONE
of us can get.

Besides, we HATE
everybody else.
They're all NECRO-
NERDS. SAND-FREAKS.

Jimmy is short
like me. He doesn't
have friends-- like
me.

They have tattoos and
stuff saying how ROMANTIC
death is. But Jimmy knows
the TRUTH-- like me.

Death is hard
an' cold an' UGLY.

Not some
cute chick!

This is a
story Jimmy
told me.

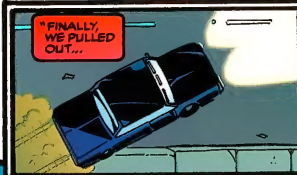
I'm putting it down just like he
said it, 'cause reproducing HUMAN
SPEECH is a talent every writer
should have.

"...BUT I FORGOT
BOLT MY SCREW-
DRIVER WHEN I
GOT IN THE
DRIVER'S SEAT.

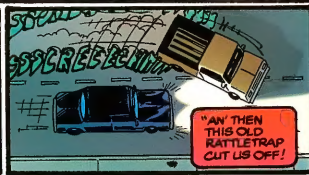
ME AND FREEM
WAS SKRAGGING
THIS CAR ON EIGHTH.
WE FIGURED WE'D
CRUISE AROUND IN
IT FOR THE NIGHT
AN' THEN DITCH
IT.

IT WAS
MY JOB T'
BINK THE
STARTER...

RIIPP!



"FINALLY,
WE PULLED
OUT..."



"AND THEN
THIS OLD
RATTLETRAP
CUT US OFF!"



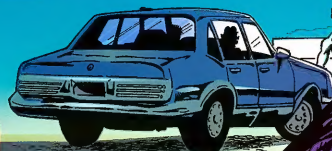
SMASH!



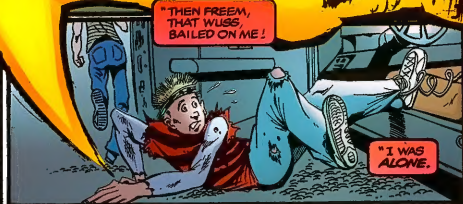
"OH, NO!"

"CARTACKERS!"

"THE GOLDARN
SCUMBALLS
WANTED T' STEAL
OUR STOLEN CAR!"

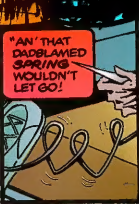


"WELL, THAT P.O.'D
US PLENTY! WE
BEGAN TO FIGHT
BACK!"



"THEN FREEM,
THAT WUSS,
BAILED ON ME!"

"I WAS
ALONE."



"AND THAT
DADBLAMED
SKEEVE
WOULDN'T
LET GO!"

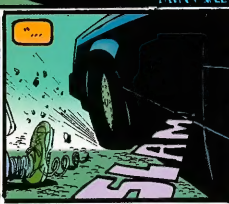


"I WAS
DEAD."

**TAP
TAP
TAP**

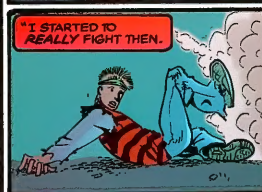


"DEAD."

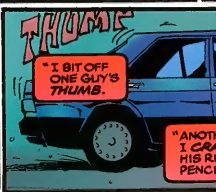


"..."

SLAM



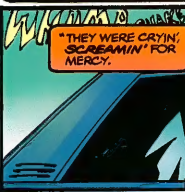
"I STARTED TO
REALLY FIGHT THEN."



THUMP
"I BIT OFF
ONE GUY'S
THUMBS."



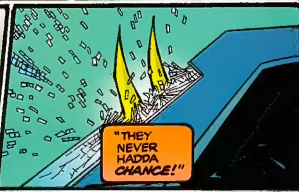
"ANOTHER GUY,
I CRACKED
HIS RIB LIKE A
PENCIL."



"THEY WERE CRYIN',
SCREAMIN' FOR
MERCY."



"I ONLY
LAUGHED."



"THEY
NEVER
HADDA
CHANCE!"

Wasn't that a cool story?

Now, this is the chapter about...

MISS JULE

She's an old friend of my mother's. I think they went to school together or something. She does this SOCIAL WORKER thing out of her apartment. Very weird.

...I SAID I'D HAVE THE MONEY, MR. BRUNO. I JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE TIME PUTTING IT TOGETHER. YOU DON'T HAVE TO EVICT THEM TODAY, DO YOU?

UHHN...

OH, YOU DO, YES, I'M SURE THAT RAT-INFESTED NOVEL IS BEING EAGERLY SOLICITED BY OTHER DESPERATE SINGLE MOTHERS, BUT DO YOU THINK YOU COULD BEAT BACK THE HORDS FOR ONE DAY, WHILE...?

Ah...?

YES, I DO REALIZE THAT YOU ARE LORD KING GOD OF THE UNIVERSE IN YOUR BUILDING, BUT PERHAPS IF I COULD SEE MY WAY TO SWEETEN THE RENT WITH ANOTHER FIFTY...? YOU WILL? YOU'RE A PRINCE AS ALWAYS, MR. BRUNO.

HI, SARAH. YOUR MOM TELLS ME YOU'RE STILL HAVING... TROUBLE.

SHE SAYS YOU BROOD A LOT. YOU SEEM TO LIVE IN THE PAST.

NO TROUBLE. I'M FINE. HE'S GONE.

THIS FROM THE LIVING FOSSIL. LIKE SHE KNOWS WHAT'S R'LLY GOING ON...

I FOUND ONE OF MY DAD'S GUNS LAST WEEK.

IT MADE ME FEEL GLAD TO TOUCH IT. LIKE I WAS NEAR HIM.

SHE KNOWS SHE LOVES YOU, SARAH.

I didn't tell her I've been CARRYING it in my coat pocket. I dunno WHY.

I also dunno WHY my mom makes me talk to Julie. She's not even a REAL therapist...like she's even a REAL social worker!

SO TELL ME HOW YOU'RE FEELING.

WHY? FEELINGS ARE STUPID. END OF STORY.

SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAVE GOOD REASONS TO THINK FEELINGS ARE STUPID AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE.

OH, YOU MEAN, LIKE, 'CAUSE I'M FAT AND UGLY? AN' HAVE ZITS AN' GLASSES? AN' MOST KIDS MY AGE THINK I'M A JOKE? AN' SO I TRY TO RUN AWAY FROM MYSELF BY SHUTTING EVERYONE ELSE OUT? THOSE KIND OF REASONS?

SARAH, YOU FEEL THAT WAY RIGHT NOW...BUT YOU'LL GROW UP. THIS PAIN WON'T LAST THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT, DO YOU?

YES, I DO.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOUR FATHER MIGHT HAVE

SHUT UP! DON'T TALK ABOUT HIM!

AND I THOUGHT MOM WAS NAIVE.

WHAT DO YOU GET OUTTA THIS? YOU SPEND Y'R OWN MONEY BAILING NOBODIES OUTTA JAIL, TRYIN' TO BUY THEM.

YOU CAN'T HANDLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ANYONE YOU'RE NOT CONTROLLING.

HEY, THAT'S ENOUGH--

I DON'T GET YOU, JULIE. Y'R NOT A FAT AN' UGLY KID WITH ZITS AN' GLASSES, BUT OF THE TWO OF US, WHY DO I GET THE FEELING THAT YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S...

...turning from herself?

Finally, Mom
showed up.

They had
the same old
argument.

Steinem!

Paglia!

PAGLIA??!

STEINEM???

MISOGYNY
disguised as
liberalism!

HUMORLESS
TOTALITARIANISM!

You're buying
into the same
old MACHO
posturing
that's holding
us back!

YOU'RE buying into
the culture of
VICTIMIZATION and
staying HELPLESS!

If all they do is FIGHT,
then WHY are they still
friends? And WHY do I
still have to come here?

OBVIOUSLY, they're
both nuts.



Like I said, Jimmy and I are EXACTLY alike. We UNDERSTOOD each other.

Like when we went to the STUPID DANCE together.

I'm not a fool. I KNOW what we look like.

We just went for laughs.

Luckily, I don't FEEL hurt or surprised anymore.

When someone turns on the lights...

...it doesn't GET to me.

Just the kind of joke Jimmy and his pals would play.

Just for laughs.

Luckily, I'm not STUPID. Like I was saying...

...I don't GET hurt anymore.

Yes... lucky me.




YES, EVERYBODY'S GONE. IT'S SAFE TO BE SEEN WITH ME.



SORRY, SARAH, BUT I HAD TO DO IT.

I'M THE SHORTEST GUY IN SCHOOL. THIS IS LIKE MY ONLY CHANCE TO BE, LIKE, COOL.





SEE, WE WERE TOGETHER 'CAUSE NOBODY ELSE LIKED US, BUT NOW EVERYBODY WILL LIKE ME.

I KNOW IT STUPID GIVE UP Y FOR EVERY BODY ELSE.

I KNOW IT'S **STUPID** TO GIVE UP **YOU** FOR EVERYBODY ELSE...

...BUT I
JUST CAN'T
HELP IT.

BESIDES,
WE WERE JUST
HAVIN' A LAUGH
...RIGHT?

5,
JUST
LAUGH
?"

NOBODY
REALLY
GOT HURT...
RIGHT?

I could feel the gun in my pocket. But even more I could feel the SWEET, HOT HATRED my dad must've felt.

YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, SARAH?

I UNDERSTAND.

YOU AREN'T
MAD, RIGHT?
'CAUSE WE C'N
STILL BE
FRIENDS AN'
STUFF, AS
LONG AS
NOBODY SEES
US.

I'M NOT MAD, JIMMY.

And the funny thing was...

...that
wasn't
a lie.

I wasn't mad. Because in that second I realized that if they had come to ME rather than him, I would've done the same thing.

I think it's an important thing for a writer to know... that she has the potential to be as ROTTEN as everybody else.

So I went to a movie.

It was about this woman who sleeps with this old wrinkled guy for money and then she feels bad about it...

And her husband feels bad too. It was pretty silly...

IT WAS SEXIST.

EXCUSE ME?

IT WAS JUST A MOVIE! CAN'T YOU EVER RELAX? WE GO TO A MOVIE AND YOUR KNEE IS JERKING SO MUCH I CAN'T HEAR!

It was JULIE and the OLD BUM from the overpass. Which meant....he was keeping an EYE on me for her? That he was her BOYFRIEND? That he really WAS a SUPERHERO...? This was all too WEIRD!

HA. HA.

NOT ONLY DID IT SEMI-ENDORSE PROSTITUTION, BUT DID YOU CATCH THE BIT ABOUT THE DITZY SECRETARY READING FALLUCHI'S BOOK BACKLASH? WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE THERE, HUH? FEMINISTS ARE AIRHEADS?!

FALLUCHI IS A PARANOID AND YOU'RE WORSE! THAT WAS JUST A JOKE--

OH, HI, SARAH. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

NOTHING.

NOTHING.

BIG FAT NOTHING.

I was hoping to ESCAPE before Julie remembered she was on a mission from God to SAVE me.

Too late.

HONK!
HONK!

SAY, KID... YOU
WANT TO GO TO
THE AQUARIUM?
THEY GOT
SQUID.

SURE!

It would drive my
mom NUTS if I ran
off for hours with
Julie and her HOBO
boyfriend.

Which is WHY
I did it, I
guess.

OKAY,
KEEDE.
NEXT
STOP--

CRASH

It was the
CARTACKERS!

In SPOTTED
UNDERWEAR!

Huh?

FREEZE...
MEEPA...
...SUCKER!

JULIE...
WAIT.

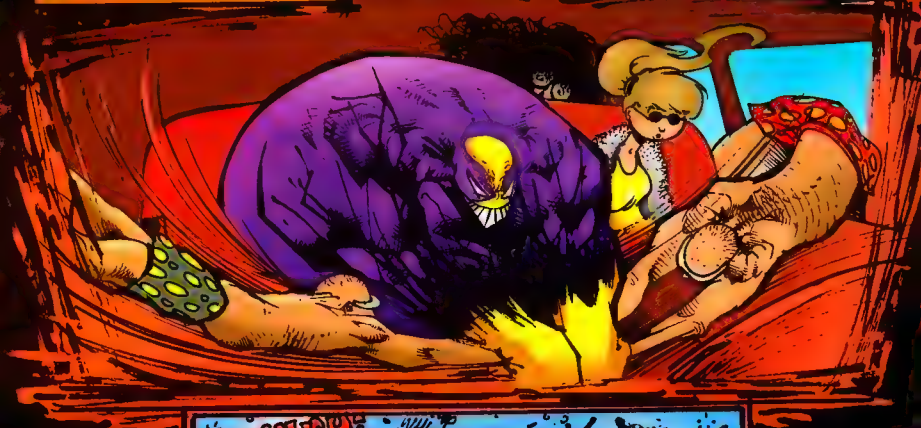




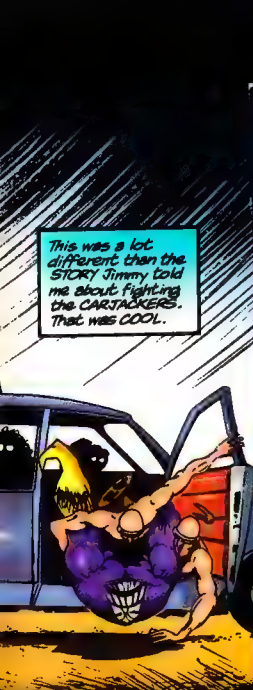
Uh-oh. I knew that look in his eyes. He was SEEING THINGS again.



Or pull them into the car...



Or something...



This was a lot different than the STORY Jimmy told me about fighting the CARTACKERS. That was COOL.

THIS WAS UGLY...

...PEOPLE GETTING HANDS CRUSHED RIGHT before my eyes!

Ripped open from KNEES to STERNUM!

Their heads POPPED like GRAPEFRUITS!

It made me feel SICK, even if...

...it did make a sort of EXCITING climax to the story.

One of them even bounced off a wall like a rubber ball, like a **CARTOON** character and came screaming through the air, grinning like a shark, straight at **MAXX**!

But he missed.

And when he died, he didn't even look **HUMAN** at all.

STOP!

SARAH...? PUT THE GUN DOWN, SARAH.

NO! NOTHING MAKES ANY SENSE!

I think it was then that I, **SARAH JAMES**, lost it.

AND IF IT MAKES ANY SENSE, THEN IT'S ALL GOTTA STOP!

CLASH

I remember thinking...
"See, I AM just like
you, Daddy. I'm gonna
see you, Daddy!"

THERE'S
NOBODY IN
CHARGE!

ADULTS RUN
EVERYTHING AND
NOTHING WORKS!

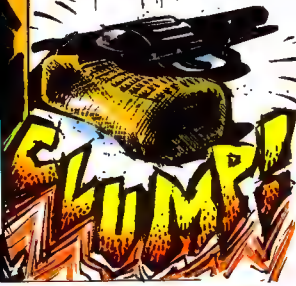
I HAVE NO
CONTROL, AND
UNLIKE YOU, JULIE...
I AM SICK OF
RUNNING FROM
MYSELF!

I'M
GONNA
DO IT!

Okay. Here's the point
in the story where I
throw the gun away on
I have this cathartic
revelation that suicides
WRONG, that life's worth
living, everything's O.K....
you know, all that crap.

And that's why
this story doesn't
work.

'Cause I just
don't BUY it.



NOBODY
BUYS IT. THAT'S
NOT WHY YOU
SHOULD GO
ON.

WHY,
THEN?

BECAUSE
THINGS'LL CHANGE.
YOU'LL CHANGE.

WHAT
ABOUT
RIGHT
NOW?

RIGHT
NOW...YOU
WAIT.



So that's my story. I still go down to the underpass sometimes, to talk to Maxx.

I THOUGHT
ONCE I DECIDED
NOT TO KILL MYSELF
THINGS'D BE BETTER.
BUT I STILL FEEL
JUST AS EMPTY
AS EVER!

PAIN LASTS,
KID. IT'S HOW YOU
KNOW YOU'RE ALIVE.
SOMETIMES I THINK
THIS WHOLE GROW-
ING UP BUSINESS
IS JUST PAIN
MANAGEMENT.

YOU GET
THAT OUT OF
A FORTUNE
COOKIE?

VERY
FUNNY.

PAIN...
JULIE RUNS
FROM MERS. MINE
FOLLOWS ME
THROUGH NIGHT-
MARES, AND YOU'RE
WADING THROUGH
YOURS.

WAITING?

NO,
WADING.

oh.

NOBODY
SAID IT
WAS EASY,
KID.

I don't know if the Maxx ever really knew my dad or not. But he knew ME enough to say that he did. Maybe that counts for something.

God, that sounds awkward. I'll NEVER be a writer.



If you haven't already gotten Maxx 1/2, write WIZARD, 100 Red Schoolhouse Road, Building B-1, Chestnut Ridge, New York 10977. They should have the skinny.

I'm supposed to plug the cassette. Plug, plug. I know what yer thinkin' — sure, there's a cool coupon in this issue for a tape and a glow, but will it show up on time? Eventually — but while you wait, here's a sure fire way to feel great. First, don't read the part where it says 6-8 weeks for delivery. Just pretend it says 3-4 months. Then, when it comes, you'll say (thinking out loud, of course), "Hey! I didn't expect this cool stuff for another three months! (I know, lame joke.) Anyway, hang in there. We want 'em out as much as you do.

The other thing I'm supposed to plug is the Topps card set which is finally done (Whew!) and coming out in October. All mock sincerity aside, I gotta thank Reuben Rude, Ira Friedman, and Don Allan for working their tails off to get these cards done right. It would have been much easier to rush out a crappy set. If you're really a MAXXHEAD, not just a collector, do us a favor and check 'em out...for me...please (beg, whimper.)

P.S. Don't believe any rumors of Maxx being cancelled. (Sorry, it just won't die.) Though it's a little late, you're holding issue #4. Issues 1, 2 and 3 were on time...and so will be #5 (September) and #6 (late October). a mystery project is to be revealed in #7.



Rob Cleaton,
Bumpass, VA

Hey, how come everyone draws the Isz better than me?

Dear Sam,

Does — wait, I forgot. Never mind.
Arun Khanna
Berkeley, California

Dear Sam,

Don't you guys ever print Bad News letters? All the fan mail on the letters page is favorable.

Dion Ritter
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Well, Dion, of course we get "bad news" letters. And to show that we're tough and not afraid of criticism, we figure what the heck! We might as well print some right here! But, hey — due to the excessive length of your letter, we've run out of room...

Hey Sam,

I know the bellbottom issue is probably dead already, and you're bored as hell reading about it, but I'm too stubborn to give up. I have one question to give to you - WHY?

Of all the passé '70's fashion statements to resurrect and slap on Julie, why bellbottoms? There must have been something even more repulsive and outdated to give her. How about a pet rock? Or a mood ring? Maybe give her a big old 'fro like that guy on the Mod Squad had. Sheesh. At least she didn't disco.

Sean Ryan
South Orange, New Jersey

OK, everyone over 30 remembers, but for the rest of us: Julie likes COOL '70's things, including Led Zeppelin, lava lamps, and classic rock. She HATES uncool '70's things, including Abba, smiley faces, and disco.

Dear Mr. Kieth and Mr. Loeb,

I was sitting in French 1B, letting my mind wander, when I came upon a most bizarre stream of thought. The class was learning to conjugate the verb mourir (English pronunciation: moo-rear) when a totally off-the-wall thought occurred to me. Moo-rear might be interpreted as "cow's butt." Being a rather warped person, I found this quite humorous, but suddenly my mind was swept back to page thirteen of THE MAXX #2. Mr. Gone's toiletry needs are dispensed through the hindquarters of a bovine! THE MAXX and French are totally unrelated, aren't they? Not so. Mr. Gone addresses THE MAXX as "Br'er Lappin." Lappin is French for rabbit. At this point my head is spinning (do you know how much it costs to have your neck

untwisted by a chiropractor? You may wonder as to the meaning of the word which started this whole mess. What does mourir mean? It's very simple. Mourir means "to die."

Sincerely,

(name withheld by request)

This letter is deep. Very deep. Too deep. Let's see if we can't get a bit more shallow.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I think I have a theory as to why MAXX is constantly hunched over. You see, if he really is a "street person," then he probably doesn't eat properly and therefore may not be...uh...regular. He would have to remain bent over to keep the cramps at bay...it's just a theory.

There is also quite a controversy over Julie's clothing. Would she be as attractive to men in a sexual way if she wore a business suit? Probably not (tho' Frazier Crane might find her compelling.) But, I have learned through keen observation that people, in general, dress in clothing that they find comfortable and can feel attractive in.

So, does Julie wear her underwear outside her pants because (a) it's the style (sort of like Chaykin's women in American Flagg), (b) she feels comfortable in such attire, or (c) Sam Kieth likes to draw half-naked women. I think it's all of the above. Julie isn't trying to attract anyone.

Now, here's a tougher question. Why does MAXX wear whatever it is that he's wearing? And did you say that thing feeds off his FACE? UGH!!!

Primatively yours,
Jason Bone
Ontario, Canada

**Hm. Why does MAXX wear what he wears?
"Cause it makes him feel cheap and dirty?
And speaking of...**

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I just thought I'd drop a quick note to let you know that you've sparked quite a bit of controversy at my school recently. It started when some of my classmates decided to reproduce your cover to Darker Image #1 on one of our walls net to our artroom. It was a beautiful reproduction that would make you proud. But it appears that not everyone is a fan of your fine work. One of our female teachers found your portrayal of women too sexist (she said the woman was in a subservient position.) So the girl was withdrawn and only Deathblow, Bloodwulf, and of course THE MAXX remained. But then the artists complained of censorship by the teacher, so Julie was going to reappear, but then she wasn't. A compromise was reached and Julie will reappear in a different position on the wall next to the mural. I hope THE MAXX lasts for a long time, and good luck with your career at Image.

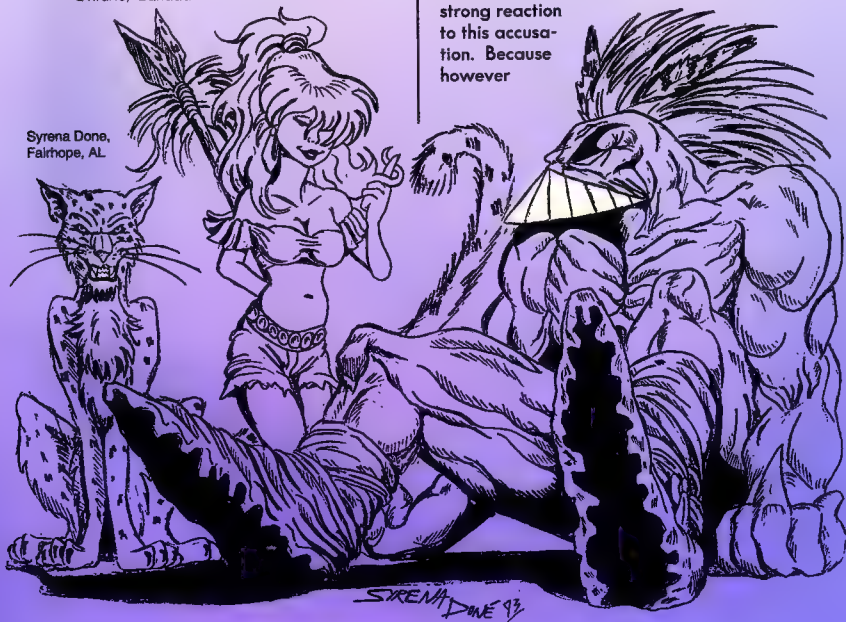
Sincerely,

John Burkle

WestLiberty, Iowa

When I first read this letter, I was going to spout some reactionary, politically correct, liberal garbage about freedom of speech and "first wave" repressed feminists NOT forcing their view of women in unflattering contexts...well, you get the idea. But then I thought, wait. Maybe there's something to this. Perhaps that's why I'm having such a strong reaction to this accusation. Because however

Syrena Done,
Fairhope, AL



imperceptible or unconscious it may be,
maybe some kernel of truth about woman's
struggle not to be disrespected has reached
the dark recesses of my dim, dull brain...then I
thought...naaww...

Dear guys,

Maxx is cool.
Keep the mask on.
Keep the feet.

Friend,
Lis Smith
Marblehead,
Massachusetts

Sam,

Thanks, quite possible
my favorite book to date,
worth the wait. And thanks
for portraying Julie as a
real person and not as
some beautifully air-
brushed enhanced
object! Julie isn't perfect
— that's why we can
identify. 'Cuz we're all
pretty flawed in our
own ways. Julie is run-
of-the-mill, and that's
OK.

Now level with
me Sam. I'm warm,
right? Julie's been
raped; her memories of
this are warped and this
fantasy world, which we
call home, is all to ease
her pain. Somehow our
Julie/Queen of the
Leopard Women has
brought THE MAXX
and Gone with her,
no? They're each living
out their deepest fan-
tasies. Julie helps others, maintains control and further sup-
presses her pain. THE MAXX gets to be a hero for her.
And Gone gets to be even more sick and twisted by punish-
ing the "evil" women of this world.

Anyways, I'm looking forward to seeing it all unfold. The
connection between the Leopard Queen and 'Brier Lappin,
everyone's role back on Pangaea, more creatures like air
wholes, Ret'Qark'n, Isz, Gbh'tyts and the crabbit-boy, I can
hardly contain myself.

Thanks for Julie once again. Ignoring and/or objectifying
doesn't help anyone. You've done neither and for that I
applaud you. It's called responsibility as an influential
artist/writer.

Prediction: Julie's emotional dam is gonna burst sooner
than later. I feel a sadness for her because, in a sense, she
represents many girls I know, girls who, like her, have
become victims.

Nuff respect,
First-Aid
Huntington Beach, California

Dear Sam,

I think THE MAXX might be Korean. All Koreans
like Pez and toast.

Andy "Ducky" Kim

Roswell, Georgia

Huh?

Dear Sam,

Man, if only I could clip Julie's toenails! That

MAXX guy is so lucky,

Mark Thibodeaux
Chauvin, Louisiana

**This guy's
definitely bent.**

Dear Sam and Bill,

I just got MAXX #3.
It's very...interesting.

You guys have definite-
ly created a real mys-
tery, and one that will
endure the test of sev-
eral issues. Oh, and
you probably won't
have to worry about
anyone stealing
your ideas, either.
They probably
can't understand
them!

Digital cassette record-
ing of a comic book?
Excellent!

Since I know
how cool you guys
are, and I know
how you probably
read Groo, you'll print
the following, won't
you?

Gross is so dumb,
he thinks that

Huckleberry Finn is a

new flavor of ice cream. (You see, I get a free auto-
graphed edition of their graphic novel, The Life of
Groo, if I can get a "Groo is so dumb..." joke printed
in a non-Groo comic, and you're about the coolest let-
ter column guys I know.)

Sincerely,

John Seavey

Eagan, Minnesota

**OK, John, we printed your "Groo is so dumb"
letter, but the joke's on you. If you read the
letters page of Groo #103, you'll see the
rules say it must be a real comic book, so that
lets us out! But, let's see how twisted this can
get. The first person to get a "MAXX is so
dumb he makes Groo look like..." (you finish
it) letter published in the Groo letters page
gets a signed MAXX #1.**

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I find myself boggled when I try to diagnose



MAXX. My theories collapse upon themselves as new issues of MAXX come in. First I thought, "This is easy: New York bum...distorted reality...early childhood trauma ("Mommy")...he's schizophrenic!" Yet Julie then disproved this by the fact that she is the one who creates MAXX as he is in her mind, which then in turn made me think MAXX is only slightly disturbed and that Julie was the big loony. How did her therapy go?

Well, here's my best guess: Julie is repressing her feelings, projecting them on rape victims and societal "losers," rationalizing to herself that she is not a victim ("I have a job, you have a blanket..."), and doing a great job of all of this! In other words, she's a Freudian basket case who could very well have Multiple Personality Disorder because of her repression. Good God, stop me before I go crazy!

Boggled, and maybe clueless,
Jeff Schatz

Interesting. I like this letter...but it makes my brain hurt.

I know I said we were out of room
for negative mail, but:

Dear sexist pig (oh, I mean Sam Kieth),

I am writing on the behalf of Mrs. Annette Lopez's letter. Your reply was: "Thanks for writing. It's great to hear from female comic fans."

What's so special about female comic fans?

What about us males, huh! Are you sexist or something? We males have run this earth very successfully without the help of feminists or those damn liberals for thousands of years. Are you aware of the reason women need their own museums and such? The reason is that no one, except for women like Madonna, have done anything that would measure up to what the men of this world have done. Excuse my sexism, but how can it be avoided when my role models have shown me such examples as this example to follow.

From a very proud, MALE, MAXX fan, nice guy,
extraordinaire, avant gard, neato keen, spiffy,
#\$%& with an attitude problem.

P.S. I'm not gay.

P.P.S You aren't very nice to people of your own sex.

P.P.S I love all your wonderful work on the comic.

P.P.P.P.S. Just kidding, glutinous pig.

P.P.P.P.S. Is MAXX wearing any clothes or is he naked?

Dear Sam Kleith,

THE MAXX is the greatest. When I picked him up and brought him back to my dorm room, I was not prepared to be so drawn to MAXX or Julia. I have been dealing with a past similar to Julia's for many years. I feel very close to her. She's a heroine and a symbol of hope in my life. MAXX is a warm, caring spirit. I wish Julia and MAXX the best of luck to overcome the pain from the past and the uncertainty of the future. I hope Julia can recapture the spirit of the Leopard Queen.

Thanks,

A.K.

Walnut, California:

Dear MAXX creative team,

I'm glad one of the reader letters in #2 touched on THE MAXX's handling of the female body's power, use and presentation. I'm also surprised; the other letters focus on traditional comic book characteristics — the superhero's past, costume, body, etc., while one of the book's truly unique and progressive aspects is its treatment of sexuality.

Julie is truly a contemporary woman — "liberated" by the progression in social attitude but not quite self-realized enough to know how to handle it. In other words, she is a feminist: true feminism is not subscribing to a set of rules (unshaven arm-pits and legs, baggy T-shirt and no bra, no makeup, short hair, etc.) but meeting the responsibility and realities of "liberation" head-on and finding your own peace with them. Unfortunately, this isn't an easy thing to do, hence Julie's conflicting dress and attitude. Obviously, she has a lot of personal growth ahead; give her some consideration.

On a final note, I love the fact that Julie dresses like a vamp and still worries about her weight – which, thankfully, is depicted as a realistic little “pot” and not streamlined. At the same time, she is depicted, tummy and all, as a powerful, beautiful Jungle Queen. Perhaps this is the “real” Julie – powerful, confident, beautiful, happy with her body and her self.

Jennifer Holderman

Madison, Wisconsin

Don't be too sure.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I like the first issue, based mostly on the art (especially those cute little black creatures) and the concept (schizophrenic personality?) The second issue, though, offered a little something new, character development. Now we know who Julie is. She's a Carmen Paglia feminist. First, I think it's great you can

HOLD IT SAM!

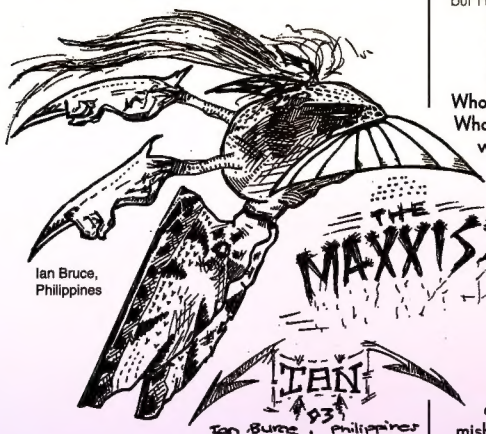
1 WANT MY OWN SERIES



Paul Shaw,
Flushing, NY

bringing a little politics in without supporting one side or another, which most creators feel the need to do. Most comics can't seem to work politics into a storyline without resorting to either clichés or advocacy. Second, I'm glad she's not a Gloria Steinem or Patricia Ireland feminist. As a Rush Limbaugh dittohead, myself, I find Miss Paglia a little more tolerable than the latter two women.

Heidi McDonald brought up some good points. The question of Pagliaism and sexuality is a valid one, especially in an industry of about 90% males. Julie is a wonderfully three-dimensional character. Yes, her clothing is a bit much, at times. But doesn't it fit? She has a valid point in using her sexuality to her advantage. Mr. Gone and Julie talking about women was



just precious. I hate to say it, but Mr. Gone has some valid points to make there. Women, as viewed through most men's eyes, are an enigma. We have no idea what's going on most of the time. Women love to be flirtatious and yet, at the same time, shy and introverted. Does it make sense that so many wear suggestive clothing, yet when suggestions are made, claim sexual harassment?

But, seriously, #3 was a great issue. So, it turns out there are about five different planes THE MAXX and Julie (in her varied forms) live on, but they never remember the others, just the one they're on. Mr. Gone, however, freely roams all planes, even getting his head chopped off at the end of issue #2 in one plane. We learned more about everyone's favorite supporting character, Julie. It seems she has had some things happen to her that changed her life around. But her current set of beliefs is really just a facade built around her real, true, inner self? Cop out; Why can't she just honestly believe Carmen Paglia? Why do you have to make excuses for it? Ugh.

Angie De Bleeck Jr.
North Haledon, New Jersey

I don't think Julie's weird views of reality invalidates her CAMILLE Paglia point of view. If MAXX's beliefs were just a facade, it wouldn't invalidate his favorite things in life (toast and Pez.) I think Paglia's views are every bit as valid as toast and Pez...uh, wait...that didn't quite come out right.

Dear Sam Kieth,
I noticed certain phrases on the wall of THE

MAXX's jail cell in #1 that I have read somewhere else before, maybe in an issue of DC's Sandman book. Hey, is it okay if I mention THE COMPETITION here?

To Heidi McDonald: What are the Paglia and Frazetta things? Is it just me or are lots of people wondering about this? I mean, I've heard of Paglia, but Frazetta9 Who the @\$%& is Frazetta?

Sincerely,
Total MAXX Fan
Santa Barbara,
California

Who's Frazetta?

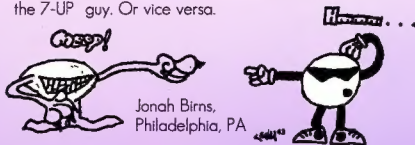
Who's FRAZETTA?!?!? Whip yourself with a wet noodle, Total.

Dear Maxx,
MAXX is a great book and all but I feel that the themes you are developing are a bit too mature, as is the story content, for many readers. I think that you could do your best work when unleashed under a "mature readers" banner, as proven by your work in Sandman.

Sincerely,
Joe Atalla

Bill and I thought the subject important enough to tackle, even though we risked mishandling it.

Dear Sam,
I detect a slight similarity between the Isz and Spot, the 7-UP guy. Or vice versa.



No, Jonah, there's no similarity. You're completely nuts to see one.

To Sam and Bill,

Having just finished reading issue #3 of THE MAXX, I feel compelled to write and offer a few comments on the series so far.

The world of The Maxx is populated by a group of unfortunate and dysfunctional individuals who are forced to transform their inner and outer selves in order to survive their personal traumas. Which brings me to my next point.

Regarding the character of Julia Winters, you have opened up an important issue rarely dealt with in mainstream comics: the terrifying reality of the victims of sexual violence. It is difficult for me to articulate how profoundly sad and touched I am by the last two pages of issue #3. Suffice it to say that I am in complete admiration of the depth, sensitivity, and most importantly, sense of responsibility with which you have handled this tragic topic.

Being a young male, I have learned that one must look inward to the heart of darkness that is the very nature of being male to understand and trans-

form our sometimes horrible potential. Maybe your book can help others to do so, as well.

Peace,
David Kiner
Ontario, Canada

Dearest Sam Kieth,

I am a nineteen-year-old girl/woman who has recently "inherited" custody of my sister's three-year-old daughter. She's beautiful, charming, intelligent, and I love her very much. Added to the rather extensive list of keeping a three-year-old entertained, clean and fed, there are the requisite cleaning, cooking, laundering, and mothering jobs that accompany a household of seven.

I, too, understand (fully embrace) the concept of an alternate world of fantasy and fabrication. I need this to survive; I sincerely believe that it is beneficial to my health. I am an amateur writer in the most extreme use of the word, but if it weren't for that escape, I could not and would not cope.

I consider myself intelligent and even learned. Yet, here, in a form of literature that I (sadly) once consid-

know I shouldn't, she is the me that retreats into an alternate world to cry and break down and then return to the real one (but which is which?) and quips that her eyes are red from too much revelry and not enough sleep.

I love her stubble, because we're all prone to get lazy upon occasion; I love her belly, because it is so much like my own; I love her wit, because it is her strongest and most reliable defense. Sarcasm can be stronger than any brick or girding when building a wall.

In short, I am thanking you, Mr. Sam Kieth, for creating that which is beautiful and real and within grasp. As I said, I don't know what she is to you or to your other numerous fans, but to me and my melodramatic flair, she is the light that shines into my soul.

Sincerely,
Mona Lewis
Ashland, Missouri

ered
beneath
me, I have
found that
which I was
searching for
without even
knowing I was look-
ing.

I don't know what
Julia Winters is to you. I
don't know who she is or
who or what she represents;
I wouldn't presume to even
try, for she is the embodiment
of many different things for
many different people. To me,
she is my pain that haunts me
when I slow down enough to think,
she is the me that eats too many
cookies when I

Jason Murphy
Jackson, Miss

